

The day after tomorrow

It has become clear by today that out of the two “sacred” objectives concerning digitalized, electronic information, that is personal data protection and publicity of data of public interest, the former one will merely be a vain hope, a momentary illusion. The latter one still can be achieved but many will not welcome it.

In my opinion, business interests gaining faster and faster global influence that make consumer society run and political considerations since the terror attacks in America don't allow privacy protection but quite the contrary, since both business and politics are concerned in the possible most thorough screening, monitoring of citizens and collecting information about them.

If private persons want to get a job, loan or visa, or avail themselves of the obvious advantages of information society in any other ways they are forced to accept that their human rights and rights to self-determination concerning their personal information are curtailed or even ignored. In a digitalised world, each action leaves a trace on a server and the big brothers – the state, employers and banks, because of different considerations – are more and more curious to study, collect and organise these traces and base decisions on them that influence a person's life.

In the material world, satellites, street monitoring video cameras and biometric identification systems monitor all our steps. Our credit card information piling up in the information space reveal more than any CV, but also our telephone calls can be tapped and electronic mails can be checked if required. We shouldn't have illusions: the ban of combining databases has become a dead letter, and the more and more advanced data-mining programs can transform the scattered digital traces into valuable information or personal profile.

Private persons become perfectly transparent in the information society and there is no place to hide, unless they want to leave civilisation and live a nomadic life like some Luddite philosophers did. The only thing we can trust is that the increasingly perfect system will operate democratically, taking into account the interests of the whole society and will not turn against us in the form of a possible dictatorship.

Unfortunately, concerning the publicity of data of public interest, there aren't so strong concerns but just the opposite, several adverse interests impede the enforcement of the principle drawn up to ensure the transparency of the government and public institutes. Accordingly, making public data public is quite sluggish, especially in Hungary where strong private interests collaborate to conceal data of public interest.

However, the example of states pioneering in freeing information shows that it is both desirable and possible to make data of public interest electronically available for everyone, and though it may cost a lot it is worth it. In Hungary, however, even representatives of the press are rejected to receive information that all citizens have the right to know, and various political forces try to intimidate Internet

communication that has become a spontaneous forum to reveal data of public interest by censoring and controlling contents.

On the one hand, the citizens of the evolving information society must be aware that more and more personal data of theirs are recorded and stored and affect their opportunities, and on the other hand, they also must spy and use their civil guts to enforce the publicity of data of public interest because equal or unequal access to information isn't only a matter of principle but it will fundamentally determine what society we will live in the day after tomorrow.